Teaching Philosophy

Deborah Husak

As I reflect upon all of my experiences, I realize I have always had a natural talent for teaching. I took me a while to realize this fact. I knew I wanted to work with people and I loved science, so I chose to major in biology and planned to teach or go into medicine. Even though my teaching courses were my favorites, I felt honored to be selected for medical school and initially chose to follow a career in medicine.

As a medical student and physician, I met people of many cultural, racial and socioeconomic backgrounds. I learned how important it was to communicate carefully because not all words have the same meaning in all cultures. I also discovered that I was most effective and happiest when I could help patients better understand their challenges. I soon realized that I enjoyed the teaching part of medicine much more than the technical side. After my residency in Family Practice, I joined the United States Public Health Service and served as a Coast Guard Medical Officer for four years. I married a career Coast Guard Officer and, when I left the Coast Guard, we were expecting our first child. I thought I would return to medicine, but moving every two years and raising two children as a military spouse with a husband at sea made that nearly impossible. Instead, I began volunteering, substitute teaching and even teaching full time in schools wherever we went. I rediscovered my joy in teaching and am excited to bring my enthusiasm for learning, my talent for teaching and my background filled with rich experiences into the classroom.

As a science teacher I hope to influence student attitudes toward science and promote lifelong skills that will enhance understanding in all areas. I hope to re-establish a sense of wonder about the world students probably had as children but was lost as their innate curiosity was eclipsed by other matters. By asking more questions than giving answers and engaging students in content through inquiry based activities and group discussion, I hope to provide more “light bulb” moments where students come to understanding through their own efforts. I believe every teacher needs to show students how science is relevant to their world by connecting the content to prior learning and real world situations. I will incorporate interesting videos, music clips, news items and controversial topics to piqué their interest in each content-rich lesson. I will close each lesson with a quick summary or ask for a re-cap of what we have learned to make sure that the big ideas were not lost in the details.

I hope my students will learn to think like scientists in the sense that scientists are problem solvers who respect and learn from each other and value clear communication of ideas. Scientists think of problems as challenges. They optimistically ask questions; gather data and design experiments, believing that they will eventually come to a conclusion that may be a solution to the problem or perhaps a step toward finding a solution. Scientists cooperate across their fields, building on each other’s research and learn from each other. It is critical that scientists be able to clearly communicate their findings so that concerned citizens will have an accurate understanding. I will give students many opportunities to learn with and from each other. I hope that students will understand how diverse talents and backgrounds of individuals on a team can contribute to their understanding of an issue. I will make sure that the environment is safe for discussion by establishing clear rules and expectations for class discussion and group work. I will use managerial and humanistic approaches to classroom management to maximize learning time and help students make good choices.

I hope some of my students will choose a profession in the sciences one day. But most of all, I hope all of my students will have experiences in my class that will help them feel confident asking questions, seeking solutions and communicating their ideas.